CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Vedas

Today's humanity is highly developed in its outer life and achievements but dwarfed and stunted in its inner growth. Man, seems to be sitting atop a volcano, which is seething within and about to blow off its lid. The humanity needs most the illuminating knowledge that can bring hope and fulfilment to the aspiration of perfection in man. What is needed is not just any knowledge, but The Knowledge, the fullest knowledge that can serve as a sure compass and lighthouse and guide and map for man's seemingly uncertain future. Today what man most needs is the nectar of spiritual wine 'soma', the dawn (the Uṣā) of a day that would heal his inner wounds, rejuvenate him and release him into a greater thought and life, would dispel his darkness and show him the light of the Spirit. Where would he find such knowledge, such a complete knowledge? It is here that one begins to discover the real significance of the Vedas. The Vedas are not books of informational knowledge or a record of outer historical events. They are history no doubt, but the history of man's inner life, a history or rather the story of man's inner quest that repeats itself from age to age, cycles after cycles till man arrives at the destined fulfilment. The Vedas are books of knowledge no doubt (the root vid means knowledge) but they are knowledge in a very special sense. First of all they contain the route map, that charts man's manifold inner journey. They also contain the knowledge of main signpost, the stumbling blocks, the dangerous dens and blind alley, the annexes and resting spots that one encounters in his progressively developing inner life. Not only this, the Vedas also describe in great detail the forces that help the deva, and the ones which hinder (the dasyus and
man in his adventure called life. This knowledge about the battle be-
tween the forces of darkness and light and about some of the milestones on the
inner path is of course found in other scriptures and esoteric literature. But
nowhere does one find in such great perfection of detail as one finds it here.
This is so because, fortunately, the Vēdas are not the record of one man’s inner
life but the transcript of experiences of many an adventurer and heroic souls
Rṣis towards Light, Truth, Freedom, Bliss and Immortality.

A close look at the Vēdas reveals that each Rṣis is as if a prototype of a certain
section of humanity. Each seer is as if a representative of a psychological type
of the race even the atheist’s Cārvāka,¹ the agnostic’s and the materialist’s
inner journey finds a record here. The Vēdas due to this richness become a
truly catholic scripture, vast in outlook and spirit, profound and many-sided in
depth and wisdom. Here is not a single austere hill pointing us away from the
earth towards the sky but many a peaks beyond peak, many an ascending and
descending stairs taking us to and from linking our earth and heaven, many a
rich field and meadow and plateau to explore. This vastness, though an initial
disadvantages for a mind conditioned in one form of thought or other, be-
comes for the race an immense advantage. All can find a nurturing home here,
the ritualist, the naturalist, the spiritualist, the materialist, and the educator.
For the Vedic Rṣis did not make a sharp distinction between the spiritual and
the material (as became the trend of later spiritual thought which recoiled
from life and denied earth). The Rṣis saw in earth and outer events the symbol
of his inner life and not vice versa. Therefore they could intuit and anticipate
even the most modern scientific ideas. Their calm wisdom always returned
back to see what good could that height be to our earthly progress. It is this
recurring note of terrestrial perfection, this deeper spiritual approach even to
material and earthly life and things, which makes the *Veda* stand as a unique scripture in the world’s spiritual literature. For the *Rṣis*, it was not only the heaven but also even the earth that was sacred. Life, even material life, birth and death, marriage and progeny and war, science and technology, art and law all were sacred. Nothing was too small to be shunned from the spiritual heights. For the *Rṣis* discovered the ‘*Samam Brahman*’, the universal *rasa* of delight behind all things, behind the sun and the moon, the rivers and meadows, the bird, the beast and the stone. He was capable indeed of an empyrean aloofness but chose instead to bring the Empyrean here (*iti, iri*). It is only a later misunderstanding of the *Veda* by a less holistic mind that reduced it into an exclusive scripture with either mystic or other worldly, or naturalistic or metaphysical thought. The *Vedas* are all this at once and more. It is this synthetic and integrative character of the *Vedic* thought and life and civilisation that marks the *Vedic* culture as unique among others. It was like a first attempt towards a spiritualisation of life; therefore one find in the *Vedas* a seed, a spiritual seed of all things. The *Vedas* are therefore not just books of knowledge or even of essential spiritual knowledge but a detailed knowledge of the working of spirit in terrestrial life.

**Limitation**

But to approach and study a scripture as ancient as the *Vedas* is not an easy task. Their origin is lost in antiquity, their purpose and meaning shrouded in mystery; the *Vedas* do not lend themselves to an easy interpretation. This is more so for a mind no more in harmony with the thought and aspiration of a different epoch of evolution. The difficulty is indeed dual. There is the philological difficulty of studying a language whose symbols and character have
undergone many a modification with the passage of time. All language is after all a sound-symbol to which the mind of the race alludes a certain meaning. The word ‘horse-power’ carries an entirely different meaning for a physicist than for a grammarian. The symbols change, evolve, and even interchange themselves as the mind of the race changes. The Sanskrit of today is not the Sanskrit of yesterday. It is true that the Vedic Ṛks has have been wonderfully preserved down the generations through the oral tradition of ‘Sruti’ and ‘Smṛti’. Commendable though the system is, what has been faithfully preserved has been the sound symbol and not necessarily the sense symbol. That is one reason why the Vedas have lent themselves to different interpretations in different ages of humanity.

That creates the second difficulty - the psychological one. One can see how poetic imagery has undergone a change as the aims and aspirations of the collective mind of humanity have changed. The modern mind preoccupied with day-to-day living and survival has begun to use symbols of everyday life as a means to express its frustrations and the growing gap between what should be and what it is. This is so different from the nature – worship of the time prior to the industrial revolution. The modern poet would find it difficult to understand Dante and Milton. In the same way, it is difficult to understand Veda, as they are placed far earlier in the time scale.

There lies the other chief difficulty in the interpretation of the Vedas by a mind out of harmony with that of the Rṣis, his quest and his aspirations, his hopes and his seeking. No wonder the commercially oriented materialistic mind of today sometimes sees the Rṣis as simply a band of plunderers who were busy asking for and accumulating outer wealth in the form of cattle and horses. It is
said that the Vedas are simply the lore of an ancient invader that came across from the North and drove down the native inhabitants. This myth of an Āryan invasion derived from a gross misunderstanding (gross or deliberate!) was never substantiated by historical, archeological or anthropological evidence. Yet, one believes it.

But the Vedas have survived all this. The myth of an Āryan invasion has been exploded. The grammarians have understood their lacunas. The naturalistic and ritualistic side of things has lost the interest of the mind of the race. But the Vedas continue to invite and to inspire as they have an esoteric spiritual meaning that is timeless and therefore always relevant.

The attempts made to understand history suffer from two main difficulties - the first difficulty belongs to the sphere of philology (the study of languages), the other to psychology (the study of mind & behavior). The data available from the archaic past is often scant and the chief source that remains is the literature of that age in whatever forms it is available. It is the lesson of history that in the long spaces of time, only that survives which can yet serve the evolutionary march of mankind. The rest of it, the ordinary and the average is buried under the ruins of time, forgotten and lost to sight though carried as an atavism in the subconscious parts. Especially so when one tries to do so by interpreting a language with which one are not in inner attunement any more. The meanings of the words are less fixed the significance more symbolically suggestive. Each word fans out various shades of increasingly subtle suggestions derived from one experiential value. A case in point is the word Dhr (hold) reaching out for meanings as diverse as Dharma (the law upholding the world), dharitri (that which upholds all), dhāraṇā (to hold attention), dhrun
(the axis), etc. So too with words like vas (vastu, vastra, vasudeva, etc.). A further difficulty arises when the language is poetic and symbolic. The 'moon' in poetry is not just the physical moon but a mystic source of calm passions. The 'sun' is also giver of life and energy, the father who nourishes from afar. Anyone with an inner sensitiveness to poetic imagery would understand this symbolism which is what calls for the beauty of poetry even today. But the symbol is private personal or sometimes universal but typical to an age. The 'snake' for instance has held different connotations for mankind in different ages, the 'horse' and the 'bull' have shared the same destiny. Therefore an exact interpretation of the Vedic age and sense is difficult even to the strict grammarian of today.

However, to be at home in the central theme of the Vedas, the method that one should follow is, to proceed from the known to the unknown. In the Vedic texts one often come across some important words that admit of no ambiguity. With the help of the obvious meanings of these words one has to find out the implications of the words that are partly obscure or totally obscure. In the Vedas there are mantras (incantations), sentences and words in abundance, which reflect modern ideas and appear quite familiar to the present-day intellect. It is at once appreciable to the present-day intellect. It is advisable and reasonable to accept such self-evident meanings. It is of no avail to leave aside such clear meanings and seek out roundabout abstruse meanings on the ground, that what one deals with are the Vedas, the writings of hoary antiquity.
For example:

"Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti"²

(The one Truth is expressed differently by the men of knowledge)

"tad Viṣṇo paramāṁ padam .... Diviva caksurātataṁ"³

(That is the supreme Status of Viṣṇu, as if an Eye wide open in the heavens)

or

"Brhaspatiḥ prathamāṁ jāyaṁaṁ mahō jyotiṣaṁ parame vyoman"⁴

(Bṛhaspatiḥ being born first as a great Light in the Supreme Heaven)

The meanings of these words are by no means obscure or ambiguous. The meanings as well as the ideas with which these words are infused are quite plain and clear enough. These expressions convey no indication of the lisping of the babe or an aborigine or an uncultured mind or even a ritualistic mind. Here one finds expressions of a mature mind enlightened with knowledge flowing from a profound realisation of Truth. Neither the befitting rhythm nor rhyme is missing.

It is little wonder that the Vedas have been the bedrock of Indian civilisation for so long. Yet, even in our approach to a scripture as vast and profound as the Veda, one has to clear our mind of one thing. Every scripture has two elements, one eternal that is of perennial value, the other local and temporal that is, secondary and derivative. The present study, is an attempt to under-
stand both these aspects, the one on the basis of the other. The mistake made by some modern thinkers is to understand the line of Vedic thought based on scant glimpses of Vedic civilisation. This process is necessarily imperfect, there is little or no means to really know what humanity was like in the Vedic age. All derivations are grossly imperfect as far as outer details of life are concerned. And to believe that those anterior to the present age were necessarily primitive savages is only a scientific superstition and an arrogant presumption. The logic of the finite is constantly outdone by the magic of the Infinite. For the modernity of a civilisation is not regarded by the outer achievements of space-craft and DNA and nuclear bombs but by the extent to which the mind of the race understood itself. The uniqueness of man is that he can reflect upon himself. And the real achievement of a race and its people lies in the degree to which they can reflect upon themselves and understand themselves and therefore the world around. For in the last analysis, it is the self-understanding that matters. What one can and therefore should do is to try and understand the thought process, the feelings and aspirations, in short the general tenor of the collective mind during the Vedic epoch. In any case, the task of discussing outer details of organisation is best left to anthropologist and archaeologists. But the present study is more concerned about the social thought the attitude and approach of the people in the Vedic age. Here lies the scope of the present study. It provides sufficient materials and many thought provoking issues, which will help the future scholars to take up further studies on the subject. The present study not only invites scholars of Vedic studies but also the scholars of Sociology, Anthropology and Archeology to find source materials their concerned fields.
Notice of the Previous Studies

1. Western Studies:

After Sayana there was a long lull in the field of Vedic interpretation. It was perhaps due to the historical and political reasons. Then the Muslim rule in India did not provide sufficient encouragement for the furtherance of the Vedic wisdom. But, the same historical necessity created an atmosphere of knowing the Hindu society and its basic structures through the learning of their scriptures. The interest grew more and more when many missionaries and administrators came from the west during British rule in India and got acquainted with the wisdom of the East. They collected many manuscripts and took back with them. This created curiosities in the minds of the western scholars. Many of them were attracted towards the East. Some of them started studying Sanskrit language and literature. The new vistas of Indological study were opened in many high institutions of learning. Here begins the new phase of Vedic studies which can appropriately be called the renaissance of the Vedic era.

The western and modern scholars are prone to make a difference between the Veda and the Śruti. According to them, the term Śruti is synonymous with the Upaniṣad and not with the Veda proper. But what is it that one actually find in the Upaniṣad that is considered by all scholars, oriental and occidental, as the repository of knowledge of the highest order? The Upaniṣad has been studied much more than the Veda in India and abroad. The reason is this that the ideas and language of the Upaniṣad are simpler than those of the Veda, and also more familiar to modern thought. The Upaniṣad is free from all the intricacies of sacrificial rites, ceremonies and mantras, etc. It deals precisely
with the clear realised truths that form the basis of the philosophical doctrines. That is why the Europeans hold that the Upaniṣad comes in as a reaction and protest against the Veda. Towards the end of the Vedic era the Ṛṣyan Hindus bade farewell to their cult of Nature-worship and sacrifices and turned towards the quest of metaphysical truths and thus a new era was ushered in. Now, on what ground do the European scholars make such an assertion as regards the historical development of Indian thought? As a matter of fact, one do notice that every teacher of Philosophy whenever he has cited anything from the Upaniṣad has also tried to corroborate it with a similar quotation from the Veda for its justification. There is no iota of proof that the Upaniṣad held any view contrary to that of the Veda or ever contradicted it. The Upaniṣad is the culmination of or a complement to the Veda. Since the advent of the dialectic social philosopher Hegel it has become a fashion among western scholars to find an antithesis in every field of historical truth. From their own history they come to learn that Christianity arose as a revolt against the idolatry of the Romans, again Martin Luther and Protestantism stood out against the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise they are, as it were, eager to discover a revolt in the religious history of India. It is not that such a spirit of antithesis is altogether absent in the history of Indian religions, but it is utterly meaningless to say that this antithesis exists as between the Veda and the Upaniṣad as well. In fact, the Upaniṣad has always approached the Veda most reverentially and hardly failed to mention. This one heard from the ancient sages who had explained it to us.

Rudolph Roth (1821-1895) was the first and foremost to write on the Vedic thoughts and people. At the age of twenty-five he got an old Manuscript of the Veda containing only seventy five hymns and out of that he could squeeze a
lot to write a long essay on the Veda; and thus he introduced Veda in the west. After some time he started his work on the Vedic lexicography in collaboration with Bohtlingk (1825-1904) and produced the famous St. Petersburg Sanskrit Worterbuch in seven volumes, which still stands as a landmark in the field of Sanskrit lexicography.

Next to him Prof. Max Muller (1823-1904) edited the whole of the Rgveda. His contribution was invaluable in the job of translating the Vedas. Besides him H.H. Wilson’s effort for the translation of entire Rgveda on the basis of Sayana’s Bhasya is still commendable. This translation in six volumes truly brought the whole of the Rgveda to see the light of the day. After him R.T.H. Griffith could complete the English translation of the Rgveda in two volumes in 1889.

Besides Roth and Bohtlingk, particular attempts were made for the dictionaries of the Rgveda. Grassmann’s Worterbuch Zum Rgveda and Neisser’s Rgveda Worterbuch are two important contributions in this field which gave a new impetus to the development of interpretation.

Some studies were done in order to interpret particular sections, hymns, verses and words of the Rgveda, which provided large materials for the new researches. Among such studies Geldner and Pischel’s joint work Vedische Studien, Bergaigne’s Seventy Hymns, Oldenberg’s Vedic Hymns (all Agni hymns), Ludder’s Varuna (in two vols.), Macdonell’s Vedic Reader are some very important contributions in the field of interpretation. Among the critical studies on the Veda works Ludwig’s translation of Rgveda in German and his Kommentar Zum Rgveda, Geldner’s Kommentar, Oldenberg’s Rgveda Text
Kritische and Exgetische Noten are some very important works to be mentioned here. Innumerable research papers on the interpretation of the Rgvedic verses and words published in many other important journals of oriental studies reveal the enthusiasm and sincere efforts of the western scholars in interpreting the Veda and taking it forward. The names of Kaegie, Zimmermann, Benfey, Weber, Hillebrandt, Keith and many others are worth mentioning who contributed immensely to the Vedic interpretation.

Though many studies and translations of the Rgveda in English, German, French, Italian came into light yet there was still a need of an authentic translation of the Rgveda. This need was, somehow, fulfilled by Geldner who translated in German, the entire Rgveda. This was completed in 1909, but the publication of the final volume could be possible only upto 1951, when it was published in three parts under the title Der Rgveda Uebersetzt with Index and Glossary.

In the first quarter of the present century, Macdonell, Keith, Bloomfield, Lanman, Whitney, Peterson and many other scholars contributed to enrich the tradition of Vedic scholarship, and they gave new dimension to the Vedic studies. Renou’s voluminous work Etude Vedique et Paninienen, Thieme’s Fremdling in Rgveda, Gonda’s Notes on Brahman, Epithets in the Rgveda, Stylistic repetitions in the Veda, the Vision of the Vedic Poets, Loka, Dhaman, Four Studies in the Language of the Veda and many other works, are considerable. Schmidt’s Vedische urata und Aonestisch urvata, Brhaspati and Indra and many research papers are very valuable contributions in the field.
2. Indian studies:

Besides, in the current commentaries on the Veda one come across explanations which are at places self-contradictory, inconsistent, lacking in clarity, fanciful and arbitrary. The same word has been used at different places to convey different meanings without any justification, and also at times the commentators have been constrained to keep silent or to confess that they could make neither head nor tail of a passage, a sentence or a word. For instance, the word ghṛta (clarified butter) has been explained as jala (water) and the word water has been used for antarikṣa (ether) and the word vyōman (ether) has been interpreted as prthivi (earth). That is why in the interpretations of Sayana or Ramesh Dutta, in spite of their supplying synonyms of words, a passage taken as a whole appears to be quite odd, confusing and utterly meaningless. One is at a loss to know whether one should indulge in laughter or shed tears over such a performance. It may be argued that the Veda was written in a remote antiquity, hence much of its archaic language is not likely to be understood by men of the present age. It is enough on our part to be able to form a general idea of it. But when one has to resort to a makeshift hocus-pocus even for gathering this general idea, then it becomes quite clear that there must have been some serious blunder somewhere. If it were possible to get the general idea of the Veda quite easily, then all the interpreters would necessarily have pursued it.

Besides the sacrificial and naturalistic interpretations there are historical (by Abinash Chandra Das), geographical (by Umesh Chandra Vidyaaratna), astronomical (by Tilak), scientific (by Paramasiva Aiyar) and even and interpretation based on Chemistry (by Narayan Gaur) and so on and so forth. “Many
minds, many ways: nowhere else may this oft-quoted adage be so aptly applied as in the case of the multifarious interpretations of the Veda”, says Nolini Kant Gupta in his introduction to veda. A few portions of the Veda that had appealed to an interpreter most in accordance with his own bent of mind gave him the impetus to endeavour to interpret the whole of the Veda in that light. The result has been that the same sloka has been interpreted in ever so many ways. But none of these interpreters has even attempted interpreting the whole or the major potion of the Veda. From this one can dare conclude that the key to the proper interpretation of the Vedic mysteries has not hitherto been found. All are but groping in the dark.

Perhaps Dayananda Saraswati is the pioneer among those who have endeavoured to give a spiritual interpretation of the veda. Pundit Durgadas Lahiri and Dwijadas Dutt have paid much attention to this aspect of the Vedas. Dayananda’s spiritual interpretation was based on the doctrine of Ishwara, Dwijadas’s on that of the Brahaman, and Durgadas’s on the devotional religious feeling.

In addition to the above mentioned interpretations, the critical edition of the Rgveda by Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, Pune, have been very great achievements in the field of Vedic studies. Velankar’s translation and annotations of Rgveda Mandala II, III and VII are important landmarks. Bhave’s Soma Hymns in three parts have created a new phase and given some new orientations to the interpretation of the Rgveda. Many research papers in this field by Vishva Bandhu, V.M. Apte, V. Subbiah, R.N. Dandekar, P.V. Kane, C.G. Kashikar, G.V. Devasthali, Ram Gopal, B.R. Sharma, M.D. Balasubramaniam, M.D. Pandit, K.P. Jog, G.C. Tripathi, B.B. Chaube and numerous other scholars have been enriching the field.
Sri Aurobindo’s esoteric interpretation of the *Ṛgveda* is indicative of the Ādhyātma school of interpretation. His books, namely, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, Secrets of the Veda, The Upaniṣad and Foundation of Indian Culture* are important contributions to the field. He had translated in all more than 4500 hymns of *Ṛgveda*. By taking various Vedic gods (*Agni, Varuna, Ashvins, Indra, Saraswati, Ocean and Rivers, Dawn, Sons of Darkness, Angirasas, etc.*) Apart from this he interpreted 42 Suktas out of 87 from the fifth Mandal and then took up selected hymns dealing with various other Gods (*Soma, Ribhus, Vishnu, etc.*) thus establishing his thesis on a sound basis of internal evidence.

These have been followed later on by many scholars like Kapali Shastri in his *Siddhanjana-bhasya*, M.P. Pandit and so on. V.S. Agaraval’s two important works, namely *Sparks from the Vedic Fire* and *Thousand syllables Speech* are extensions of the same field. Similarly, earlier than Sri Aurobindo, Swami Dayananda Saraswati gave another dimension to this field. His spiritual approach to the *Ṛgveda* gave a new awareness to the Indian minds during the days of freedom struggle. His creation of *Ārya Samāja* movement gave new orientation of thinking to the old Vedic thoughts. The blending of the new and the old order has shown a new path to the masses. *Swamiji* tried to explain Veda in his own way basing his views on the sayings of *Nirukta*.

> “mahabhāgyād devatāyā eka ātman bhadadhā stīyate, ekasyātmano ‘nye devāh pratyangāni bhavanti”⁵

The one God or Ultimate Reality is invoked in many forms, other Gods are just the manifestations of the same reality. Which reminds the famous verse:
“ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti...” He explains every verse of the Rgveda in the light of his above concept. One may differ with his methodology of the interpretation, however, his bhasya on the Rgveda Mandala I to VII is an unique contribution in the field of interpretation and its importance cannot be ignored.

These two methods of interpretations have influenced the modern minds immensely, but as they are incompatible with the modern Historical Method of Interpretation it could not be possible to take them in the preview of the present study, however, their value is not minimised.

Now, at the last, a question arises about the exigencies of the present study. As one have observed there are many conflicting views about the meanings of the verses of the Rgveda, hence it becomes necessary to assess the previous works and evolve the suitable meanings in the various context of the Rgveda. Sayana himself differs on the meanings of the same words in different contexts and thus creates dilemma for the students of the Rgveda. Hence, need was felt to examine critically his Rgveda-bhasya with comparison to other interpretations in order to arrive at certain conclusion. Up to now western scholars have mainly drawn their conclusions on the basis of Sayana, and sometimes they differ too, which again seemed problematic.

Therefore, whatever has been possible in a limited time and means, everything has been taken into account in this humble attempt. Internal and external evidences, grammar, Nirukta, Philology, lexicons etc. have come to much help here. Though much importance has been given to the internal evidences, yet other possible means have not been ignored. Many translations research works
commentaries and so on has been used in this work. Several books by Gonda have proved to be of immense help in understanding many inherent concepts of the Veda. I hope this humble but sincere effort will open some new dialogues in the field of the Rgvedic studies.

Methodology

In the study of such magnitude the attempt is made here to study different views presented by prominent scholars in this field, and tried in our limited way to understand “The socio-religious conditions in the Vedic period”. The attempt is as if a salt doll goes to measure the sea and in the attempt the salt doll becomes the sea and looses its own identity. There may be many flaws, discrepancies in understanding and the language sometimes vague and obscure.

Vedas has two elements, one eternal that is of perennial value, the other local and temporal that is secondary and derivative. The first chapters, is an attempt to understand both these aspects, the one which is the basis of the other.

It was Vedavyāsa who arranged four Samhitās according to the requirements of the process of symbolic sacrifice, and he transmitted Rgveda to Paila, the Yajurveda to Vaisampāyana, the Sāmaveda to Jamini and the Atharvaveda to Sumantu. In due course they transmitted them to their pupils, and in this fashion of transmission from teacher to disciple the tradition of oral transmission was developed. What were the general classification of those knowledge is the aim of second chapter.
It is said that the Vedas are simply the lore of an ancient invader that came across from the north and drove down the native inhabitants. This myth of an Āryan invasion derived from a gross misunderstanding. Is it gross or deliberate is the focus of the third chapter.

In the first part of the fourth chapter, there has been an attempt to look deeply and closely at the significance of the Indian image of the Rgvedic society. It is contributed to the Seers, Ācāryas, Puroḥritis, Brahmachārins families of the Angirah, Bhṛgus, Atharvans, Atris, Kāṇvas; etc.,

The second part discuss extensively about Rgvedic spiritual culture, This Vedic religion contains a treasure of philosophical insight. But the key to the riddle of Vedic philosophy lies in the symbolism of the Gods. Some of the fundamental religious concepts of the Vedic Gods, their significance and role in Rgvedic period have been examined.

Chapter five deals with the age of Later Samhitās. The first part treats the social aspect of the entire Samhitās whereas the religious aspect discussed in a separate section.

Atharvaveda is not appreciated much by the priestly class. A collection meant for domestic use and for the performance of magical rites, minimising the importance of Gods, making divinity merely decorative. The magical rites, particularly black magic which could inflict pain and even death was one of the main objections by the priestly class. The difference between Atharvaveda and Rgveda is also discussed methodically. It has Arthaśāstra, Āyurveda, Daṇḍaniti, Kāmaśutra in the seed form which later blossomed into treaties in their respective fields. This section on Atharvaveda goes into these details.
Next part of the Fifth Chapter is on Sāmaveda. Importance of Sāmaveda is described in the Bagavadvīta also. “Vedānām Sāmavedasmī” says Lord Kṛṣṇa in Bhagavadgīta. Sāma is pleasant, it contains the melodies and music for the chant used from the Rgveda for the sacrifices. Persistent recitation of Om, the greatness and importance of Om is discussed. The relation between Sāmaveda and Rgveda, the intricacies in recitation, the stress on Uddāta, Anudāta and Svarita. The Saman Chant, the collectively chanting and the importance on accurate pronunciation was stressed for the preservation and the purity of the original sound. Sāmavedic Variations are discussed and few are quoted.

Yajurveda is the outer symbol of an inner sacrifice. The next section of the Fifth Chapter was the source of great inspiration as it describes the significance of the Gods, events, sacrifice etc., Yajurveda is a great book of divine revelation, a revelation that is unique and unparalleled in the history of human experiences. The significant mantras and prominent suktis are mentioned. Yajurveda sets forth a yogic practice for purifying the mind and awakening the inner consciousness. The knowledge was shared by all irrespective of the caste.

Next part of the fifth chapter is dealing with Brāhmaṇas. The age of Brāhmaṇa is an age of forms, concerned more with the externals of religion than its spirit. Symbolic significance is behind the ceremonies that are purely external and are performed for some worldly gains. Āranyakas were solely for the seekers of knowledge and not for the uninitiated. It contains knowledge in cryptic language. These two are dealt in this section.
Chapter six deals with the *Upaniṣads* and the *Sūtras*. Through the stories of Śvetaketu, Aruṇeya and Satyakāma Jābala shows the Values of the society in that period. Special features like the family life, caste system, position of women, educational system are prominently brought out in this section.

The decline of the Vedic Age after its full vigor of life, there was an inevitable encrustation of the mystic tradition. Soon, however, there followed a moment of revival and this took two paths of development. One took the form of spiritual knowledge gained by the ancient seers. The other was concerned with preservation of the ritualistic aspects, the external of the Vedic religion. The later took shape in the *Brāhmaṇa* and the former in the *Upaniṣads*. In this second part of the sixth chapter significance and concept of major *Upaniṣads* is discussed.

The next part of the Sixth Chapter traces the origin of rituals and describes the evolution and the relevance of rituals in the present day society. How these rituals dominated the entire life span right from the birth of a child to the death of an individual, these rituals were the constant companions of an average Hindu. The daily rituals of householder, the place of fire in every day life, the futility of rituals in higher spirituality are also discussed.

What is the secret of their arrival right up to modern times? What is their relevance, if any at all to the modern man? These questions are answered in the concluding part of the study. The humanity today standing on the brink of a precipice, is about to fall in the valley of self created abyss. The answers lie in our going back to our roots, take nourishment from there and build our lives synthesizing the wisdom of ancient Seers with the achievements of today. In the concluding part this theory is developed.
A bibliography has been added at the end for the convenience of those who wish to make special studies of any particular topic. Generally speaking the Bibliography is selective in character and does not aim at giving an exhaustive list of works on the subject.

In addition to appendix, general references have been added at the end of all chapters in order to indicated books or articles in periodicals which have been extensively used or frequently referred to in the body of the text.

All this primary sources such as *Rgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaveda* are consulted faithfully for the collection of materials. The secondary sources such as Research papers, books and critical remarks of eminent scholars in the field of Vedic studies are also followed here to substantiate the hypothesis.